



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

Headquarters

400 Seventh St., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Formatted: Right: 0"

Troy Iwamoto, President  
Roberts Hawaii Tours  
680 Iwelei Road, Suite 700  
Honolulu HI. 96817

RE: Honolulu Department of Transportation Bus Rapid Transit Project

Dear Mr. Iwamoto:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the proposed Honolulu Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT) dated April 14, 2003. Your letter raises several concerns about implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit System that include: 1) the impact of the project on local traffic, 2) limited input of public and stakeholders, 3) the negative impacts of the project on private transportation carriers, and 4) the need to advance the regional BRT before the in-town BRT.

The decision of how best to provide transportation service within a specific geographic region, including the choice of specific alignments or investment strategies is not made by the Federal government, but is the responsibility of local decision makers. Local officials are closest to the unique circumstances of their area and are in the best position to consider all relevant factors. FTA encourages active involvement of the public in the planning and project development process. I recommend that you work with local officials to ensure that their concerns and ideas are considered. The project manager is Please feel free to contact Ms. Cheryl Soon, Director, Honolulu Department of Transportation Services, at (808) 523-4125 to discuss specific concerns.

The FTA requires a high level of public involvement during the early stages of project planning and that the locally preferred alternative is a product of local and regional consensus. In areas where there does not seem to be a consensus about the mode, technology, or alignment, the FTA has requested that the grantee undertake additional studies, consider other alternatives, and work closely with community leaders toward a general consensus, reach an agreement. With regard to the proposed BRT project, the Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS) is required to complete the NEPA environmental review process and Preliminary Engineering, and then undertake the Final Design process, as part of the FTA planning and project development process. The DTS is undertaking preliminary engineering on the proposed BRT and has made a number of refinements and alignment changes as a result of public comments received during the public circulation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in August-September 2000. The availability of the DEIS and the public hearing on it were widely advertised in Honolulu as required by FTA regulations. The changes in response to public and other comments on the DEIS resulted in a supplemental DEIS that was made publicly available in March 2002. A public hearing was also held on the supplemental DEIS.

~~FTA has received a review draft Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that is currently being revised to consider the impacts of a revised minimum operating segment portion of the BRT within Honolulu. However, the~~ DEIS and supplemental DEIS ~~does~~ address many of the concerns listed in your letter, as follows:

**Increased Traffic Congestion:** As you are aware, traffic congestion in Honolulu is severe, and the Transportation Impacts Chapters of the DEIS and supplemental DEIS reflects the current state of transportation system congestion, and notes that neither the Build Alternative, Transportation System Management, or No-Build alternative will significantly improve traffic congestion. However, the build alternative will provide a transportation alternative that may provide increased capacity and improved travel time-savings for transit riders.

**Limited Public Involvement:** With regard to public involvement, ~~the~~ Appendices A, Coordination and Consultation, of the DEIS and of the supplemental DEIS, list the hundreds of shows over 200 meetings that have been held with stakeholder groups and community groups since 1999. Numerous changes have been made to the alignment alternatives and configuration to the in-town BRT system as a result of input received during the public reviews ~~of the DEIS.~~

**Impacts to Private Transportation Providers:** For impacts to private transportation providers, it is difficult to quantify the level of impacts and identify proposed mitigation measures. However, if the No-Build alternative was adopted, it is unlikely that private transportation providers would benefit from the increased traffic congestion, and decreased travel time, that would happen if no improvements were made at all. Thus, if you have proposed infrastructure improvements that would benefit private transportation providers and help resolve traffic congestion, you should work with the DTS and local elected officials to implement advance those improvements.

**Advance the regional BRT before the in-town BRT:** The priority for implementing the BRT is the decision of local elected officials and transportation stakeholders in the State of Hawaii and the City of Honolulu.

Please be assured the FTA will consider the level of local and regional consensus, the State and local financial commitment to the project, and the involvement of the general public, the business community, and elected officials ~~into the~~ planning process prior to ~~consideration of~~ any FTA project approvals.

Please feel free to contact ~~me or~~ the FTA Region 9 Administrator, Mr. Leslie Rogers, at (415) 744-3133 if you have any additional questions or concerns. Thank you for your interest in the project and making us aware of your concerns.

Sincerely,

Ron Fisher, Director  
Office of Planning Innovation and Analysis